

the so-called Chained CPI would be that beneficiaries who retire at age 65 and receive average benefits would get \$560 less a year at age 75 than they would under current law. Around here \$560 may not seem like a lot of money. But if you are 75 years of age and are bringing in \$14,000 or \$16,000 a year, and you are trying to pay for prescription drugs or health care, \$560 is, in fact, a lot of money. Worse, if we moved toward that Chained CPI, Social Security benefits, by the time a senior reached 85, he or she would receive \$1,000 less a year, which would be a 6.5-percent cut in their benefits.

So we are in an unusual moment in that the people who helped cause this recession—the greedy people on Wall Street whose recklessness, whose greed, whose illegal behavior drove us into this recession—are not being asked to contribute one nickel toward deficit reduction. They were bailed out by the American people, and in many respects they are now doing better than they did before the Wall Street crash.

Many here are saying, my Republicans friends especially: No, Wall Street CEOs making tens of millions a year, who helped cause this recession, do not have to contribute one penny toward deficit reduction. But if you are an 85-year-old senior citizen who is struggling to take care of basic necessities, well, my goodness, we are going to have to do deficit reduction on your back.

That is not what America is supposed to be about, and that is not what the American people want. Poll after poll suggests the American people believe we should move toward deficit reduction based on the concept of shared sacrifice; that we are all in this together.

Even if you are a millionaire and you make a whole lot of campaign contributions, and, yes, if you are a billionaire and you have lobbyists running all over Capitol Hill, you know what. You are going to have to help us with deficit reduction. And, yes, given the fact that we have major corporation after major corporation—oil companies and Wall Street—making billions of dollars in profits and in some cases paying nothing in taxes, guess what. We are going to do away with those loopholes so they start contributing toward deficit reduction. Given the fact we have tripled military funding since 1997, yes, we are going to have to make some cuts in military spending.

Let me conclude by simply saying: Yes, we have to reduce our deficit and deal with our national debt. But the issue is not a big deal or a small deal, the issue must be a fair deal—one which protects Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the needs of working families, and a deficit-reduction approach which asks the wealthiest people and the largest corporations to also participate in deficit reduction.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I would suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2055, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2055) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Coburn (for McCain) amendment No. 553, to eliminate the additional amount of \$10,000,000, not included in the President's budget request for fiscal year 2012, appropriated for the Department of Defense for planning and design for the Energy Conservation Investment Program.

Johnson (SD) modified amendment No. 556, of a perfecting nature.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, as we begin our third day of debate on the Military Construction-VA appropriations bill, I would like to encourage my colleagues to file any amendments they may have as soon as possible, as we would like to begin disposing of amendments in short order. While we are waiting, I would like to take a few moments to talk about the VA portion of this bill.

The bill totals \$58.6 billion in discretionary spending for the VA in fiscal year 2012. Additionally, the bill contains \$52.5 billion in advance appropriations for health care for our vets. One of the very few funding increases above the budget request contained in this bill is for VA medical research. As every Senator knows, the unique combat situations in Afghanistan and Iraq have left many vets suffering significant injuries, including PTSD and TBI. We have a moral responsibility to take care of those who have put their lives

on the line to defend our Nation and it would be shortsighted to cut funding for critical research designed to improve medical outcomes from injuries suffered on the battlefield.

Over the last several years, tremendous progress has been made by the Department in reducing the number of homeless vets. According to the VA, in 2005 an estimated 195,000 vets experienced homelessness on any given night. Today that figure is down to 75,600. Progress is being made and this bill continues those efforts.

The bill also includes funding for the VA to transform from a Department heavily dependent on paper to a modern agency that leverages technology to shorten the time vets have to wait for services. The funds contained in this bill are necessary for the VA to deploy its automated claims processing system on time.

These are only a few highlights of the VA title of the Military Construction-VA appropriations bill. As I have mentioned from the outset, this bill is a result of a bipartisan effort. Again, I urge my colleagues to file any amendments they may have so that we can continue to make progress in moving this bill toward final passage.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. I ask unanimous consent that Senator COLLINS be added as a cosponsor to amendment No. 556.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I wish to begin by expressing my appreciation for the remarks of the Senator from South Dakota about the need to help our veterans, particularly those who have been serving in these recent endeavors. I wish to express my personal appreciation once again for the service his own son has given our country during this period, and to the service of the Senator from Illinois, the ranking Republican on this bill, as well as to my own son for having served as an enlisted marine and infantryman in Ramadi, Iraq, through some of the worst fighting of that war.

I rise today to discuss two amendments Senator WARNER and I have filed to this particular bill. Each relates to the Navy's proposal to homeport a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier at Naval Station Mayport in Florida by 2019.

One amendment would eliminate funding of nearly \$15 million for a Navy